United Nations E/2005/89

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 August 2005

Original: English

Substantive session of 2005
New York, 29 June-27 July 2005
Agenda item 4
Towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration

President's summary of the coordination segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council 2005

(5-7 July 2005)

1. The deliberations on the theme of this year's coordination segment focused on the implementation of the agreed development goals and the role of the United Nations system at both the international and country levels. They complemented the discussions at the high-level segment and contributed to bringing greater thematic coherence to the various segments of the Economic and Social Council session. Discussions at both segments contributed to the preparatory process for the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to be held in September. Delegations commended the Secretary-General on his report submitted to the Council on this question (E/2005/56). They also welcomed the report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) entitled "One United Nations — catalyst for progress and change: how the Millennium Declaration is changing the way the United Nations system works".

2. In his opening remarks, Ali Hachani, Vice-President of the Council, noted that this year's theme was particularly timely in view of the upcoming High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly. Pointing out the close link between the themes of the high-level and coordination segments of the Council, he said that while the high-level segment had focused, inter alia, on the challenges facing developing countries and on the priority areas in which future efforts would need to focus, the coordination segment would focus on how the United Nations system organizations could realign their activities to support the achievement of the goals and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration, particularly the Millennium Development Goals. He said that the Secretary-General had provided important insights on what the system was doing to respond to this challenge in his report. Mr. Hachani also said that while there would be no negotiated outcome document for the segment, he would prepare a summary of the deliberations during the segment, which would form an important part of the input of the Council to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the Assembly.

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3. The Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, noted that major progress had been made in the elaboration of a common policy framework in support of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations development agenda but that a truly integrated follow-up to the conferences had yet to emerge. He stressed that the Economic and Social Council, with its functional commissions, would be particularly well positioned to overcome the sectoral approach that still prevailed in United Nations organizations by forging work around the development agenda. He observed that proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General to establish a peer review mechanism and a development cooperation forum could help to realign the United Nations system in support of implementation. He proposed that the report of CEB be considered in a segment that had a thematic link to the report rather than in the general segment, which is currently the case.

4. The work of the CEB, in ensuring a better coverage of the Millennium Development Goals in the system, was commended by several delegations. It was also recognized that the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) had proven useful in implementing the Goals. In response to a question from the floor on the relationship between CEB and UNDG, the Assistant Secretary-General cited the work of CEB and UNDG on the triple crisis of HIV/AIDS, food and governance in Southern Africa and discussions on field operations, in particular the role of resident coordinators, as examples where CEB and UNDG had cooperated closely. The regional dimension in the implementation of the development agenda was also highlighted by several speakers.

5. During the debate, speakers identified implementation as the key challenge ahead. It was generally recognized that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals went hand in hand with the implementation of the development goals agreed by the international community at the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields during the past 15 years. One delegation said that the Millennium Development Goals were a veritable "locomotive" of the global development agenda.

6. There was a general agreement that the Economic and Social Council should play a central role in the follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, as well as in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. They noted that because of the breadth of its mandate and its convening power, the Council was especially well placed to serve as a platform for systematic and comprehensive monitoring of overall progress in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda, as well as for holding continuous dialogue and for generating new ideas on the most conducive national and international environment for development, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General. In this context, several delegations called for further strengthening of the Council, while some underlined the importance of streamlining and improving consistency in the intergovernmental process, with more efficient meetings, a clearer focus and working methods aimed at implementation rather than at reopening existing commitments.

7. Member States expressed their support for the convening of an annual meeting at the ministerial level to review and assess the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and the Millennium Development Goals. Several

speakers said that the functional commissions, in accordance with their mandates, should continue to have primary responsibility for the review and assessment of progress made in implementing outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits. While speakers agreed that the working methods of the functional commissions should be further improved, one delegation favoured harmonization of the functional commissions' multi-year programmes of work and their periodic cycles. Other delegates, in line with General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, did not deem it appropriate to apply a uniform approach. Several speakers noted that by bringing more predictability and certainty to its own programme, the Council would enable the functional commissions to better prepare their contributions to the work of the Council, and stressed the importance of a multi-year programme of work in that regard. Moreover, the consolidated report on the work of the functional commissions should be used more effectively in the work of the Council.

8. The proposal put forward by the Secretary-General for a high-level development cooperation forum found general support among delegations, although there were some divergent views on the purpose of such a forum. One delegation said that the forum should discuss global economic problems and assess emerging challenges and threats in the economic, social, environmental and humanitarian fields and promote responses to them. Another delegation proposed that the forum review global, regional and national strategies and policies for sustainable development cooperation. Various views were also expressed with respect to the modalities of the meeting, in particular the segment during which the meeting should be held. Options proposed during the debate included holding the forum during the high-level segment or for the high-level segment to be replaced by the forum. With regard to participation, delegations said that the forum could bring together Member States, international organizations, the private sector and civil society and that it should make use of the work of the regional and functional commissions.

9. Several delegations supported the proposal for a voluntary peer-review mechanism. Underlining the complexity of peer reviews, one speaker suggested that the idea of a pilot project of voluntary peer reviews be discussed in more detail to evaluate their value added and the costs involved.

10. There was general support for the proposal of the Secretary-General to hold timely meetings to respond to natural disasters and other threats to development and for the Council to have an important role in reconstruction and rehabilitation in countries in post-conflict situations. However, one delegation said that further consideration needed to be given to how the Council could contribute to post-conflict situations and humanitarian crises and that ensurance should be given that the Council's role would remain at policy coordination and review rather than direct intervention in the operational management of specific situations. It was also pointed out by one speaker that the realization of these new initiatives did not require a radical revision of the structure and timing of the current substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

11. Delegations stressed the significance of the annual high-level meetings of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development as a forum providing an opportunity for all to participate. There was a call for enhanced interaction between the Council and the international trade and finance institutions. One delegation said

that the issue of bringing the Bretton Woods institutions under improved governance structures and into closer collaboration with the United Nations system should be addressed by the forthcoming High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly.

12. Delegations generally shared the view that, at the country level, the United Nations should be seen as operating as one team under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator. The need for strong support from all members of the United Nations Development Group and specialized agencies for the Resident Coordinator in promoting the system-wide coherence of United Nations actions to help achieve the agreed development goals and in improving cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions was also underlined.

13. With regard to cooperation among agencies, speakers noted that funding modalities resulted in competitive relationships among the organizations. One delegation pointed out that adequate and predictable funding needed to be ensured to prevent competition between United Nations field bodies. Others stressed that the Council's role in providing guidance to the United Nations funds and programmes and in promoting policy dialogue and partnership could be strengthened, noting that the United Nations system of funds and programmes and specialized agencies had been expanding over time in scale and scope of activities, leading to significant duplication of mandates and actions between different bodies. Hence, the forthcoming High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly should give a clear mandate to the Organization to work out proposals for further streamlining the United Nations system into more tightly managed entities. One delegation also pointed out that duplication between the work of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly must also be avoided.

14. Several delegations emphasized that reform of the Council should also ensure strengthening of the links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system. It was underlined that the internationally agreed development goals should form essential elements of national development strategies — including poverty reduction strategies, where they exist. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to the three components of sustainable development — economic development, social development and environmental protection. One delegation supported a more integrated international environmental governance structure, based on existing institutions, and favoured the establishment of a United Nations agency for the environment, based on the United Nations Environment Programme but with a revised and strengthened mandate.